

Message Text

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53

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

----- 029739

R 031714Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8675

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 01708

EXDIS

CAPETOWN FOR EMB

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, RH

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH NKOMO

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SUMMARY: JOSHUA NKOMO BELIEVES THE WEST IS LIABLE TO RE-

PEAT ITS ANGOLAN MISTAKES IN RHODESIA. HIS TALKS WITH IAN SMITH HAVE REACHED A CRUCIAL POINT WITH THE WHITE SIDE REFUSING TO MOVE BEYOND PROPOSALS FOR EVENTUAL PARITY. NKOMO BELIEVES HE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN SECURING BRITISH ASSISTANCE, AND EXPECTS THE UK WILL SOLICIT US DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 2, EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH RHODESIAN NATIONALIST LEADER JOSHUA NKOMO IN HIS SUITE AT LONDON'S SAVOY HOTEL. NKOMO HAD BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY -- NEWSPAPER INTERVIEWS, PRESS CONFERENCES, MEETINGS WITH ZIMBABWE RESIDENTS IN BRITAIN, AND LONG APPOINTMENTS WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN AND MINISTER OF STATE ENNALS. HE SEEMED FATIGUED AND IRRITABLE WITH HIS STAFF THAT SWIRLED UP AND DOWN THE CORRIDORS OF THE HOTEL. HIS HEAVY BODY COLLAPSED INTO A CHAIR WHEN THE DISCUSSION BEGAN, BUT THE CONVERSATION PROCEEDED IN STACCATO FASHION WITH AN INTERRUPTION OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER EVERY MINUTE OR SO.

2. NKOMO FIRST ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF HOW EVENTS IN ANGOLA HAVE AFFECTED HIS TALKS WITH IAN SMITH. THE BLACK LEADER CLAIMED THAT THE ISSUES OF THE SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS ARE RHODESIAN, AND LESSONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES DO NOT NECESSARILY APPLY. THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE TALKS HAD CHANGED, HOWEVER, AND THERE EXISTED A RENEWED SENSE THAT THEIR MOMENTUM MUST BE MAINTAINED AT ALL COSTS. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BREAKDOWN NOW WOULD SPREAD INTO THE POLITICS OF ALL NATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. AT LEAST FOR SOME INTERESTED PARTIES, NKOMO SAID, ANGOLA MIGHT PROVE A CATALYST IN BRINGING THE RHODESIAN TALKS TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. CONCERNED LEADERS, LOOKING AT THE DETERIORATION OF ANGOLA, MAY BE EVEN MORE INTENT THAT NEGOTIATIONS IN SALISBURY REACH AN ACCEPTABLE ACCOMMODATION SO THAT THE TURMOIL ON THE CONTINENT'S WEST COAST IS NOT TRANSPLANTED TO THE CENTER.

3. NKOMO CRITICIZED THE WEST FOR ITS PERFORMANCE IN ANGOLA. HE CHARACTERIZED THE WESTERN RESPONSE THERE AS TOO LATE AND REMARKABLY CLUMSY. WESTERN LEADERS SHOULD

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HAVE HELPED THEM PERSUADE THE FORMER PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT OF THE INEVITABILITY OF WHAT WAS SURE TO OCCUR IN AFRICA. BUT THEY HAD BEEN AS BLIND AS THE PORTUGUESE THEMSELVES AND ARE PRESENTLY ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IN ANGOLA FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER THE RUSSIANS HAD CAUGHT THE SCENT OF CHANGE. NOW, SAID NKOMO WITH A FIXED EYE ON AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION, THE WEST IS AGAIN IN DANGER OF PERMITTING EVENTS TO SLIDE FROM BEYOND ITS CONTROL AND

OUT OF THE REACH OF ITS INFLUENCE. THIS TIME IT IS RHODESIA. IF WESTERN LEADERS STAND BY WHILE THE PROSPECTS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT GROW DIM, THEY WILL THEN AGAIN FIND THEMSELVES IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TOO LITTLE INFLUENCE TOO LATE IN THE GAME. THE WEST IS FLAILING ABOUT IN A BELATED ATTEMPT TO RESCUE ITS INTERESTS IN ANGOLA, DEAF TO THE SOUND OF FIDDLES IN SALISBURY.

4. TALKS WITH IAN SMITH ARE NOW AT A CRUCIAL STAGE, NKOMO SAID. PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN EXCHANGED AND ARE MEANT TO BE WORKING DOCUMENTS FOR THE NEXT SES-

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 031714Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8676
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
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AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 01708

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SION LATER THIS WEEK. THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION, NKOMO WAS RELUCTANT TO PAINT A BLEAK PICTURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT HE SUBSEQUENTLY ADMITTED THAT THE TWO SIDES REMAIN FAR APART. THE RHODESIAN REGIME HAS NOT QUESTIONED THE REASONABLENESS OF NATIONALIST PROPOSALS, BUT ITS WILLINGNESS AND SINCERITY IN THE DISCUSSIONS SO FAR HAVE
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BEEN INHIBITED BY THE WHITE COMMUNITY'S ABIDING FEAR OF A BLACK DOMINATED GOVERNMENT. TO ALLAY THIS FEAR, NKOMO'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION FALLS CONSIDERABLY SHORT OF ONE-MAN, ONE VOTE. INSTEAD, HE HAS PROPOSED A STRUCTURE IN THE PARLIAMENT BASED ON A QUALIFIED FRANCHISE WHICH PERMITS A NARROW MARGIN OF MAJORITY RULE AND AT THE SAME TIME GUARANTEES SIGNIFICANT WHITE PARTICIPATION. OTHER PROPOSALS PROVIDE FOR A VERY GRADUAL AFRICANIZATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE MILITARY, AND THE JUDICIARY, PER-

HAPS RUNNING AS LONG AS TEN YEARS BUT WITHOUT THE GOAL OF COMPLETE AFRICANIZATION. IN SUCH A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, MARKED BY MODERATION AND GRADUALISM, THE WHITE AND BLACK COMMUNITIES WOULD LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER, TO INTEGRATE THE SOCIETY, AND TO PRESERVE THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERESTS. OTHERWISE, NKOMO PREDICTED, THE WHITES WILL LOSE EVERYTHING. THIS NATIONALIST DESIRE FOR REASONABLE COMPROMISE HAS NEVERTHELESS SUFFERED A DISHEARTENING SETBACK. SMITH'S COUNTER-CONSTITUTION, NKOMO SAID AFTER SOME PRODDING, PROVIDES FOR AN EVENTUAL PARLIAMENT AND FRANCHISE STRUCTURED IN SUCH A WAY THAT "THE MOST WE COULD EXPECT IS PARITY, AND THAT ONLY AFTER A NUMBER OF YEARS." SMITH IS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO SURRENDER THE CONCEPT OF WHITE DOMINANCE IN RHODESIA. THE TWO SIDES HAVE APPARENTLY TALKED PAST EACH OTHER.

5. OUTSIDE POWERS WITH INTERESTS IN THE AREA, NKOMO ASSERTED, MUST NOW MOVE TO EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE TO ASSURE THAT THE TALKS DO NOT COLLAPSE. SMITH MUST BE MADE TO STEP BEYOND THE WHITE LINE. NKOMO HAD CONVEYED THIS MESSAGE TO FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN THAT AFTERNOON, AND HE IMPLIED THAT THE BRITISH HAD AGREED TO PRESS VORSTER TO IN TURN SQUEEZE SMITH. NKOMO ALSO IMPLIED THAT THE BRITISH WILL BE ASKING THE UNITED STATES TO INTERVENE DIPLOMATICALLY AND WILL RECOMMEND SPECIFIC ACTIONS.

6. COMMENT: NKOMO LEFT THE IMPRESSION OF A TROUBLED MAN WHO SEES THE WALLS CLOSING IN AROUND HIM. HE HAS REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT BY THE PRESS ON WHETHER HE IS OPTIMISTIC OR PESQIMISTIC, BUT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION THERE IS A HOLLOWNEQS TO HIS EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE. HIS OBVI-
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OUS FATIGUE ALD THE HARRIED ATMOSPHERE OF HIS LONDON VISIT COULD SCARCELY SUPPORT AN IMAGE OF BRIGHT EBULLIENCE. STILL, IT SEEMS THAT THE TALKS IN SALISBURY ARE NOT GOING WELL AND THAT NKOMO NEEDS HELP. HE IS RELUCTANT TO ADMIT OPENLY THAT AN ENORMOUS CONCEPTUAL CHASM STILL SEPARATES THE TWO SIDES, FOR SUCH AN ADMISSION COULD STALEMATE THE TALKS AND LEAD TO HIS DEMISE IN RHODESIAN POLITICS. END COMMENT.

7. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEARN THE FOREIGN OFFICE VERSION OF NKOMO'S VISIT.

SPIERS.

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